(c) the reasons for overlooking these objections by the Revenue Intelligence stating the objective anticipated to be achieved by the Government by relaxing the gold import limit by the NRIs?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) The Government have increased the quantity of gold imported by NRIs from 5 kgs. to 10 kgs. in pursuance to the Government's policy of liberalisation. The Government's policies in this regard has also been supported by the demands of various Members of Parliament in Lok Sabha on 20.12.96 during the discussions on Starred Question No. 423. The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence have not raised any objection in respect of the above policy.

(b) and (c) In view of the reply to 'a' above, the question does not arise.

Cases Referred to Central Board for Bank Frauds

1718. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 327 given in the Rajya Sabha on 25th Februry, 1997 and state the number of the bank fraud cases which presently stand referred to the Central Board for Bank Frauds stating the amount involved therein?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have reported that as on 4.3.1997 no fraud case has been referred to the Advisory Board on Bank Frauds constituted by RBI on 17.2.1997.

Criteria for Loans to farmers Under Special Loan Account of NABARD

1719. SHRI SANJAY DALMIA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the criteria adopted for the sanction of loans to farmers under special Loan Account being operated by the National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development; and

(b) the number of farmers granted loans under this scheme in the country, State-wise with special reference to Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) in Order to enable the command Area Development Authority (CADA)/Land Development corporations (LDCs) to take up on-farm development works on the holdings in the command areas of farmers ineligible to get institutional loans, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) constitutes a Special Loan Account (SLA). Funds to the extent of the estimated expenditure in respect of such ineligible farmers are earmarked for the SLA and are contributed to the extent of 37.5% each by the concerned State Governments and central Government as special deposits and the balance 25% by NABARD out of its own resources.

The SLA is used to provide medium and long term loans by way of refinance assistance to financing institutions for providing loans to CADA/LDC to meet the expenditure on on-farm development work on the holdings of farmers ineligible to get loan from institutional sources. The present rate of interest of loans from SLA is 9% p.a. Further the concerned State Governments are required to give irrevocable gurantee to the financing banks as to the repayment of loans given by the bank to the CADA/LDC.

(b) The number of farmers who have been benefitted under Special Loan Account Scheme in Maharashtra, as

reported by NABARD, during the last three years is indicated below:

1993-94	1994-95	1995-96
1165	581	NIL

NABARD have further reported that information in respect of Andhra Pradesh for the above three years is nil. The State-wise information in respect of the remaining States is being collected by NABARD.

News Item Regarding Illegal Tax Collection

1720. SHRI SANJAY DALMIA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned 'Illegal tax collection is nothing short of a scandal: Chelliah' appearing in the Times of India dated November 16, 1996;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of Government thereto;

(c) the details of the action taken against the officials involved; and

(d) the steps proposed to be taken by Government to improve tax administration?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Taxes are collected under the provisions of Taxing statutes. In case the views of the tax collecting agencies are not upheld, that does not make the collection illegal in itself warranting action against the officials.

(d) Improvement and modernisation of tax administration is an on going process. It is taken up on top priority basis.

Prevalence of Hepatitis-B in Country

1721. SHRIMATI BASANTI SARMA:
DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR:

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the virus Hepatitis-B is playing havoc in the country;

(b) if so, what is the prevalence and incidence of Hepatitis-B in our country; and

(c) what steps are being taken to control Hepatitis-B?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI): (a) and (b) Available data indicate that about 3–5% of the population are having chronic hepatitis-B infection.

(c) An Expert Committee has given certain recommendations in regard to the introduction of Hepatitis-B under the immunization programme. It has been decided to immunize the hospital workers of central Government Hospitals in the first instance. In addition screening of donated blood for Hepatitis 'B', Promotion of safe sex behaviour and use of disposable syringes etc. are also undertaken.

World Bank Assistance for Family Planning to Gujarat

1722. SHRIMATI ANANDIBEN JETHABHAI PATEL: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any World Bank assistance requested by the Government of Gujarat for the Family Planning Programme during the year 1995-96;

(b) if so, the details of the assistance provided to the state so far;